



Can't you see it ?



17 1 4

Chapter 1 by Just12holdyourhand

Prologue

It was a typical work day for me the day it all started. I was making my usual rounds, moving from street corner to street corner, looking for my next paying customer. And, before you start to get any ideas, I'm not a prostitute; I'm a magician.

I whistled a low tune as I walked, a mix of Justin Timberlake's "Sexy Back" and Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On". It was utterly horrible to listen to and sounded like a dying moose, so it was a good thing that wasn't how I made my money. Anyone listening in at that moment would probably have gone deaf.

I shuffled my deck of cards in my hands as my feet carried me toward Central Park. I always got a good number of people to watch me there. My already collected change jingled in my pocket with every step that I took.

The half-shaded area beneath a tree looked like an okay spot to perform at, so I stopped there and pulled my black fedora off my head, surrendering my dark curls to the wind that was gently blowing. Resting one sneaker-clad foot on a tree root, I shouted out, "Hey, New York! Who

wants to see some magic?"

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Those simple words attracted a crowd of people in minutes. I started, to my satisfaction. My gray eyes flitted from face to face, and I landed on a man in his mid-twenties with reddish-blond hair.

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I motioned toward him. "Wanna help me with my first trick?" I grinned when he nodded. "Okay, handsome, what's your name?"

"Darren," he replied, his voice a tad bit higher than I'd expected.

Oh well. "All right, Darren, my name's Andie, and I want you - " I fanned my cards out facedown and held them toward Darren. " - to pick a card."

He did as he was told, selecting a random card from the middle. "Okay, you know the drill, memorize that card and show everyone but me."

Darren turned the card toward the audience. "When you're done, stick it back into the deck. There you go. Lovely."

With that step completed, I shuffled the deck a few times before pulling a card off the top. It was the seven of spades. "Is this your card?" I asked.

Darren shook his head with a smile. "No."

I pretended to be disappointed. It was all part of the trick, of course. "No? You sure?" He nodded, and I chose the next card on top. The three of clubs. "What about now?"

"Nope," Darren laughed, thinking he'd beaten me.

I stuck my lower lip out in a pout. "This is stupid," I whined, setting the deck down on the grass.

Almost immediately, the cards caught fire and burned away to nothing. All except for one. I laughed, bending over to pick it up. Holding it between two fingers, I twirled it to show it to my adoring crowd. It was the deuce of hearts. "Is this your card?" I asked, already aware of what the answer was.

"Yes," Darren breathed, a look of amazement on his attractive face. "How did you do that?"

"Magic," I replied.

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grinned. "Don't forget to give a tip," I added, indicating my hat that was now half-full of pocket change.

"I can give you better later," Darren said with a wink before walking away. As soon as he was out of sight, I rolled my eyes. Over confident douchebag.

The next few hours passed quickly, and I performed that first trick more than once after that. Gotta love flash paper. The sky was growing dark, so I collected my earnings and retreated to a nearby bench to count. On the way over, I bumped into a man in a dark hoodie, nearly falling to the ground in the process.

"Watch where you're going!" I snapped. I didn't wait for a reply as I stalked off.

The steady jingle of coins being dropped into my pocket filled my ears. I'd made a decent amount of money, and was quite proud of my own skills.

Laughter and the sound of several voices brushed away the thoughts of money. Looking up, I saw a group of people standing in a large cluster around what I assumed to be another magician. I stood, replacing my hat on my head with a quick flick of my wrist.

I melted easily into the crowd, unafraid of using my elbows to get to the front. Anything to watch another magician's tricks.

"I'm going to flip through this deck, and I want you to see one card," the magician, a man with dark, shaggy hair, was saying. He pointed to the card on the bottom, the deuce of hearts, the same card from my first trick. "Not this one, that's too obvious. Pay close attention."

He was talking to a woman with equally dark hair and eyes. Those eyes looked lustful, like she was stripping him with her mind. If he noticed, he showed no sign of caring as he flipped through the deck, too fast for her to catch.

He paused a moment. "That was too fast, I'll do it again. Are you ready? Okay." He did it again, slower this time. The seven of diamonds caught my eye, and I was almost positive she saw it too.

"Now, did you see one?"

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"Yes," she breathed, her voice barely above a whisper.

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"Do you have one in mind?"

"Yes."

He fanned the deck out to show every card, but the seven of diamonds was missing. "Now, do you see your card here?"

It took her a moment to answer as she looked them over. "No," she said slowly, like she was stupid and didn't know if it was the right answer.

The guy wore an almost smirk as he replied, "That's because you're looking too closely. And what have I been telling you all night? The closer you look..."

"The less you see," the entire crowd chorused. And with that, he threw the cards behind him into the air, turning around as he did so to smile at something above my head.

I followed his gaze to see the seven of diamonds lit up on the front of the building before me. The crowd erupted into cheers, louder than I'd received. Nonetheless, I found myself feeling just a little bit impressed. This guy was good.

The girl he was performing the trick for had ventured closer and placed her hand on his arm. Slut, I thought, almost amused by her antics.

The magician guy noticed me watching. His bluish eyes looked me up and down, like I was some object up for auction and he needed to know whether I was worth it or not. The slight curl of his lip and his following smirk told me I was, in fact, unworthy of his time and attention. And with that exam over and that lady attached to his elbow, he was gone.

"Dick," I muttered once he was out of earshot.

Back at my apartment later that night, I was removing my jacket when a card fluttered to the ground. It looked like a tarot card from what I could see, and had a tall tower pictured on the

front. The tower was printed underneath in blocky lettering.

On the back was an eye. As in the eyes of the magicians with any sense strove to become a part of. And with that, I was beyond anything I could ever hope for in my wildest dreams.

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A date.

March 29

4:44 pm

4 East Evan St. NY, NY

I was joining the Eye.

Chapter 2 by Just12holdyourhand



Chapter One

Days later, on March 29, I woke up at five in the morning out of sheer anticipation for the coming evening. The sky was still dark outside my bedroom window, but I was too anxious to go back to sleep. Instead, I rolled out of my bed onto the thinly-lined carpet floor and stood to go take a shower.

I was in there longer than I probably should have been, because when I got out it was going on six-thirty and the sun was starting to peek out on the horizon. Regardless, I smelled good, my legs were shaved, and the hot water had worked wonders on my tense muscles.

Wrapped up in the fluffiest towel I could find, I padded across the floor to my closet. What to wear... I thought, my hands on my hips as I pondered. Usually, I didn't care what I looked like, but if this thing with the Eye was serious, then I needed to look at least halfway decent.

After slipping into my typical black-bra-and-underwear deal, I tugged on black skinny jeans and a black button-down with the sleeves rolled up to my elbows. Lace-up black boots went next. Then I tugged a brush through my hair, deciding to let it dry on its own, and slapped my fedora on my head.

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A successful magician out

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By then, my stomach was growling, so I grabbed a few twenties out of their hiding place with my socks. That should last me the whole day.

There was a Starbucks a few blocks over from my apartment, so that's where I went first. My usual breakfast order was a mocha frappuccino and whatever muffin pleased me at the time. That day it was a blueberry one.

I sat at a table and ate my muffin, taking tiny sips of coffee through the straw. I was trying to make my drink last, but chances were I'd have to come back and get another in the afternoon.

I tossed my empty wrapper in the trash and exited the coffee shop, still sipping lovingly from my frappuccino. My next destination was the nearest bookstore, which was where I spent most of my free time whenever I wasn't performing tricks. On that particular day, I was planning on staying until lunch.

The musty smell of book pages greeted me as soon as I opened the door. I smiled; I loved the bookstore. My feet knew exactly where to go, so I let them lead me toward the romance novels. They were a secret fetish of mine, those books. I didn't really believe in true love or love at first sight, but those stories were entertaining to read. I mostly ended up making fun of them.

I grabbed Fifty Shades of Grey to see what all of the fuss was about. After reading it for hours, however, I felt scarred in ways I didn't know I could be. So, I put that book back, paid for some other books of various genres, and left to get lunch.

Subway didn't sound too bad. I was in the mood for a sandwich. I fast-walked the few streets in between before wrenching open the door and inhaling the sweet scent of baking bread. I was seriously in good-smell heaven.

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I tossed my empty cup in the garbage and ran into the bathroom to brush my teeth. I tried to put some order to my curls, but that feat was impossible, so I set my hat back on my head and called it a day. That is, after I swiped on a coat of mascara and a lining of chapstick.

I still had a good fifty minutes before I had to leave, so I settled onto my bed and flipped on the TV. Channel surfing was an excellent pastime.

I stopped on some random show to see a man being interviewed. That man was none other than Thaddeus Bradley, the annoying twit who made money by debunking magicians' tricks. He was arrogant as hell and was the bane of every magic maker's existence. I scowled at the irritating way he spoke, and hated the woman interviewing him for laughing at the jokes he made.

When I couldn't stand to watch him anymore, I pressed the "off" button and threw my remote against the wall. Something about him pissed me off to no end.

By the time I'd calmed down enough to put on my shoes without dropping them, it was time for me to leave. I ran a shaky hand through my hair once before replacing my hat on my head. After making sure my tarot card was still in my pocket, I took a deep breath and opened my apartment door. It was time for the adventure to begin.

I had no clue how to get to East Evan Street, so I hailed a taxi and hoped for the best. Luckily, taxi drivers were more knowledgeable than I gave them credit for, as we arrived at a rundown-looking group of apartments in ten minutes flat. Grinning madly by now, I passed over the money I owed him and climbed out into the street.

The blaring of a car horn split my ear drums and I jumped out of the way. My taxi driver laughed at me before pulling away from the curb and merging into the road.

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"All right, so here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna scope the place out. You wait out here. I'm gonna come back and get you, okay? Do not come in," spoke a man's voice.

For a brief moment I thought someone was addressing me, but when I looked to my left, toward 45 East Evan Street, I saw a man with dark hair and a man purse talking to a woman with fiery red hair and a coffee cup. The man's appearance and voice struck a familiar chord within me, and it took me a few moments to realize he was the magician from a few nights previous, the one who'd looked at me like I was no better than a bug. And he was way more attractive than I'd remembered.

"Hey, Danny?" the woman said as she walked toward the ancient-looking door.

The man, apparently called Danny, stopped to stare at her. "Yeah?"

The woman opened the door and stepped inside. "Not your assistant anymore." As an afterthought, she added, "Nice hair." Then she disappeared inside.

Danny stood there for half a second before going after her. "So, actually, uh, what - what have you been up to?"

Interested in this private conversation, I rushed forward and slipped in behind him, just before the door shut on me. From what I'd observed about who Danny was and where we were at that moment, I assumed that Danny and his lady friend had also each received a tarot card like me.

"I think you know exactly what I've been up to, Danny. I saw all your 'anonymous' postings on my website," the redhead continued, walking up a flight of stairs.

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Danny was just behind her, and I followed him. I could feel the police I was there. Of course, I was wearing ten... than the ginger in her boots.

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"You have a website?" Danny asked, trying to pretend he had no idea what she was talking about. "That's good. Good for you. Get the word out."

Something about the way he said it came off as extremely sarcastic and further solidified my opinion of him being a major douchebag. I choked down a snarky comment as we reached a landing at the top of the stairs. Automatically, I sank back into the shadows of the stairs.

In front of the door at the end of the short hall stood a tall man in his late forties. He wore a black fedora perched on top of his bald head. I already liked him, just by seeing his hat that looked similar to mine. He had laugh lines by his eyes and his mouth, indicating that he was a generally humorous person. He raised his eyebrows when he saw Danny and the redhead. "Oh. 'Kay. So, apparently, none of us was the only one chosen. Let me be the first one to kick my ego to the curb."

I grinned from the darkness. Yeah, I definitely liked this guy.

Danny strode forward and indicated the door. "Uh, excuse me."

"Door's locked."

"Is it?" Danny asked, moving toward the door anyway. "I'll check."

I rolled my eyes at his back before directing my attention toward the fedora man and the redhead. Fedora was talking to her now. "You... Now, hold it, don't tell me. Uh... Helen? No no... Henley."

A mentalist... I realized with a small smile. I'd been looking at these three for a while, things would definitely get interesting.

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"It's on your coffee cup," Danny cut in, glancing over his shoulder.

The man barely indicated he'd heard. "Thanks for keeping me honest. But that wasn't mentalism, by the way. That was just an observation." He smiled at Henley. "Second observation: you are beautiful."

Danny was looking very red in the face from behind the guy's tall shoulder. Henley merely returned Fedora's smile. "Thank you."

"Okay that's very - very nice. Very well polished. Nice bit." Danny came forward to offer his hand. "J. Daniel Atlas. Nice to meet you." The fedora man flipped him his middle finger, which made me giggle from my hiding spot. "Very nice."

I was tempted then to move forward and present myself, but Danny, or Daniel, as I was now going to call him, kept going. "I know who you are and I just wanna say, I'm not interested in you doing your, uh, your mentalism thing on us, especially when we don't know who brought us here or even if it's real."

"Jesus, do you have a speech impediment or something? You sure stutter a lot." I strode out of the shadows and went to stand across from Daniel. "And you should stop being so narcissistic. It's kind of annoying."

Daniel stared at me like I'd sprouted another head. "I'm sorry, uh, what - what are you - who are you - "

I put on a falsely cheery grin. "I know you!" I giggled.

Daniel's face suddenly melted into a look of arrogance. "Oh, a fan? Great, that's great!" He smiled at me and offered his hand.

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never left my lips.

Henley and the man with the fedora burst into laughter at Daniel's slightly confused facial expression. Henley even went so far as to pull me into a hug. The fedora man stepped forward to shake my hand. "Merritt McKinney," he chuckled, winking at me.

"Andie White," I replied, holding out my other hand to Henley, even though I knew her name.

She smiled, lighting up her pretty twenty-something appearance. "Henley Reeves."

Merritt clapped me on the back while I stood there and grinned, giggling at my behavior with Henley. I was already starting to like these two.

Daniel was now trying to splutter out some belated retort, but Merritt quickly shushed him, holding his fingers to his head. "Sh..." Henley laughed again. "Hold on, I'm sensing... I'm sensing you... are a control freak?"

I was almost holding my stomach and doubling over in pain from the force of my laughter. Daniel's expression was priceless. "I'm sorry, have we met before?"

Henley cut in. "It doesn't take a mentalist to figure that out. You are a control freak."

"Well, I take that as a compliment."

Henley rolled her eyes at Merritt and I. "Only he would take it as a compliment."

"Okay. Great. Good. Another compliment." See more of Story Wars

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"Wow," Henley muttered, looking at me with a quick smile. "You're along the lines of 'shut up, you arrogant dick!'"

Merritt had been watching the short exchange quietly, his eyes following back and forth to listen to each speaker. Now, he spoke up. "Okay, so that's why you're no longer a couple."

The effect of those words on Henley and Daniel was immediate. "Couple? Oh, no, we were never a couple," they sputtered, almost in unison. I grinned. They were totally together at some point.

"He used to saw me in half," Henley continued, almost pleading with me to believe her.

"She was a very good assistant," Daniel added.

Henley turned to glare at him. "Yeah, but I was too fat for Danny."

"No, I said that one time, because of the - the trap door. Narrow space." Now it was Daniel trying to convince me he was in no wrong.

The redhead held up her hands to indicate a tiny box. "You built it this size. No one could fit through there. No one."

"Rebecca fit through there," Daniel sneered. "Rebecca fit through there for years."

"Do you know how hard it is to fit into those tiny little costumes?" Henley demanded, stepping forward until she was almost in his face. I was tempted to split the two of them up, but decided I was too entertained by the scene to do it.

Daniel scoffed. "Uh, no, I'm the most athletic of the bunch."

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I held out my hand to push them apart. "Enough!" I yelled. "Stop!" I yelled at Henley before they started throwing punches. "Okay, okay, that's a bit too far. Time to shut up now, Daniel!"

Merritt was busy consoling Henley. "Okay, so he never made you feel special. And, trust me; you deserve to be made to feel special."

"Enough with the flirting, Merritt," I laughed, winking at Henley, who was now smiling faintly. Merritt just shrugged my little comment off and smirked at Daniel's borderline-angry face.

"That's a very - a really nice story. You guys enjoy each other's company." He turned to go, but the sight of someone walking up the stairs stopped him.

The person was a young man with dark brown hair and matching brown eyes. He looked like he was in his early twenties, and wore an old leather jacket and a black t-shirt with dark jeans and boots. In all honesty, he wasn't that bad looking. I was actually in some pretty attractive company between him and Daniel. I mean, they weren't Brad Pitt, for sure, but they weren't really that bad. Daniel's only problem was that he was a bag of dicks.

"No way," the guy breathed, stepping toward us. "J. Daniel Atlas?"

I raised my eyebrows. Really? A fan of Daniel? Well, if that wasn't a turnoff, then I don't know what is.

He moved forward to shake Daniel's hand. "Dude, I have seen everything you have ever done. I mean, you're like... I-I idolize you. Seriously."

"A true fan," Daniel greeted, throwing me a "what now" look. However, I was too stuck on the fact that this new guy stuttered too, if just slightly. "It's so nice to meet you."

Somehow, I didn't think that was

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"I'm Jack, by the way," the

Merritt cleared his throat. "Question: did you get one of these?" He held up a tarot card. In the midst of all the arguments and such, I'd almost forgotten what we'd come here for.

Jack dug around in his pockets. "Yeah, um, yeah." Finally finding it, he showed it to the four of us. "Death." The smile he wore while saying that kind of worried me.

Henley offered up her own card. "The High Priestess."

"The Lover," Daniel muttered somewhat smugly.

Henley coughed "three minutes" and the smugness was dropped.

"Hermit," Merritt sighed. I couldn't help but laugh a little at that one.

I extracted my own card from my pocket, and took half a second to study the drawing of a tower that was being struck by lightning. A faceless person was falling off the top of it. Very curious. "The Tower," I stated, flashing it at them.

Jack shuffled nervously on his feet. "So, what are we - are we - we waiting for someone? Why - why are we - "

"The door's locked," Daniel and Henley said in unison, glaring at each other in the process.

Jack's face broke into a grin. "Oh, no, nothing - nothing's ever locked." And with that, he went to the door, pulled something out of his pocket, and stuck it into the keyhole. Seconds later, the lock was picked, and the door swung open.

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We all stood right behind him, but he didn't seem to care. He pushed the door open from the safety of the hall. I nudged Jack with my elbow. "That's a little risky, isn't it?" I was only half-joking.

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Henley was the first to step in, brandishing a flashlight. "What is this place?"

The rest of us filed in behind her. Daniel, Jack, and Merritt also had their own flashlights, and I was beginning to feel a little left out. Why would I have even bothered to remember to bring a flashlight in the first place? I mean, really, why did they even have them? It wasn't that dark. Granted, the lights were also all off.

We came upon a bathroom, which was covered from floor to ceiling in dust and grime. It was disgusting, and looked like it hadn't been cleaned in years. The smell of rotting food hung in the air, but I couldn't see a kitchen, so I wasn't sure where it was coming from.

"Oh. Wow. Thought my apartment was nasty," Merritt murmured from beside me. I raised my eyebrows at him, but he just shrugged.

"Man, it's freezing in here," Jack noted from my other side. Regardless, he was walking close enough to me that I could feel the heat radiating off his body. I made a mental note to stick by his side.

We stumbled upon a room that was completely empty other than a folded piece of paper, a rose, and a vase of water. "What's that?" Henley asked, indicating the paper.

"I don't know," Daniel answered, taking a few steps forward to pick it up.

"What's it say?" Merritt asked.

"Now you don't?" he read aloud, a puzzled look on his face.

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Henley had gone over to the rose and was holding it between her fingers. "A rose by any other name," she sang

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Immediately after, the water drained out of the vase from the bottom.

"Guys, what's happening?" Jack asked, appearing right by my shoulder. I stepped a little closer for heat and shrugged.

"Woah. Look at that," Merritt breathed as Daniel also made a noise of awe.

The tiny stream ran along the dusty wooden floor toward a carving of five rectangles connected by a few lines. Once the marks were completely full, they descended a few inches and out poured a white gaseous substance.

Jack grabbed my elbow and pulled me back a ways. "It's gas!" he exclaimed. I was a little touched by his concern for my safety, but I knew what it really was.

"Relax, it's just dry ice," Merritt replied, confirming my suspicion.

"Cool," Henley said.

Daniel was on the verge of pacing. His expression was of utmost seriousness as he slowly asked, "Wait, what do you think this is all about?"

Merritt put one hand to his temple and closed his eyes, concentrating on something only he could see. "Hang on, hang on..." A few seconds passed, and then a few more, as we all waited in anticipation. "I got nothing," he finally said, opening his eyes.

"Okay, thank you. Thank you for the delay," Daniel replied sarcastically.

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"I'm just trying to create the scene for my story," Jack defended, looking a little miffed at Daniel's snarky comment.

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But Daniel wasn't done. "Okay, so - so you're like Buddha, if he wasn't so enlightened."

"And you're like Jesus if he was arrogant and all his miracles were fake," Merritt shot back quickly. I had to stifle a bit of a laugh at the both of them. They were grown men, and they fought like eight-year-olds with bigger words.

Henley took that time to cut in. "Okay, lovebirds, get a room." Both men's eyes got big and their mouths hung open. "Danny, be honest, did you do this?" Henley continued, turning her attention to Fake Jesus.

"No. Wait, did you?" He pointed to Jack, who had been quietly standing by during the short squabble.

Jack grinned a little nervously. "Well, I wish."

All of their eyes turned to me. I held up my hands. "Oh, you got me. I totally took the time to bring the four of you, who I've never met before, to a dirty old apartment just to be funny." I pushed my sleeves back up my arms, as they were slipping down. "Sorry, not me."

"Why didn't anyone ask if I did it?" Merritt complained. When none of us answered, he frowned. "Oh. Oh, great."

Daniel was off to the side of the room, flicking the light switch. Nothing happened. "Electricity's out," Jack called from a different spot in the room.

Merritt was standing underneath one of the creaky overhead lights that looked ready to fall at the slightest touch. He reached up to one of the light bulbs. "Well, let's check," he muttered, and then twisted the bulb.

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words, and so much information I could hardly take it all in right away.

"Blueprints," Henley breathed, stepping forward to get a closer look.

"They're incredible," Daniel added, standing across the blue mass from me. His eyes darted to my face for a split second, and then they were back on the image in front of us.

Jack spoke up. "Who do you think did this?"

I shrugged, while Henley answered, "I don't know, but I really wanna meet them." She paused a moment, taking the time to look at each of us. "It's a show."

I realized she was right after studying it a bit more. And, like Daniel had said, it really was incredible. And we all had to do this together? That'd be interesting.

Simultaneously, Merritt and I spoke. "Wow."

Write a draft for chapter 3 of 8

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